Horticulture Tips
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Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University

GARDEN TIPS FOR JULY!
David Hillock

- Make fall vegetable garden plantings in late July. Fact Sheet 6009 gives planting recommendations.
- Water plants deeply and early in the morning. Most plants need approximately 1 to 2 ½ inches of water per week.
- Mowing heights for cool-season turf grasses should be at 3" during hot, dry summer months. Gradually raise mowing height of bermuda grass lawns from 1 ½ " to 2".
- Sharpen or replace mower blades as needed. Shredded leaf blades are an invitation to disease and allow more stress on the grass.
- Continue insect combat and control in the orchard, garden, and landscape. (FS 7306, 7313)
- Check pesticide labels for "stop" spraying recommendations prior to harvest.
- Control bermuda grass around trees and shrubs with Poast, Fusilade, or Glyphosate herbicides. Follow directions closely to avoid harming plants.
- Harvest fruit from the orchard early in the morning and refrigerate as soon as possible.
- Providing birdbaths, shelter and food will help turn your landscape into a backyard wildlife habitat.
- Insect identification is important so you don't get rid of the "Good Guys." (FS 7307)
- Divide and replant crowded Hybrid iris (Bearded Iris) after flowering until August.
- Expect some leaf fall, a normal reaction to drought. Water young plantings well.
- Vegetative establishment of warm-season grasses should be completed by the end of July to ensure the least risk of winter kill. (F-6419)
- Brown patch disease of cool-season grasses can be a problem. (F-6420)
- Meet water requirements of turfgrasses. (F-6420)
- Fertilization of warm-season grasses can continue if water is present for growth. (F-6420)
- The hotter and drier it gets, the larger the spider mite populations!
- Have you visited the OKG Studio Gardens in Stillwater for a group tour?

Junior Master Gardener Program
David Hillock

The Junior Master Gardener[sm] program is a new and innovative 4-H youth gardening project. Level One of the JMG program is designed for children in grades 3 to 5. Level Two has just

recently been released and is designed for children in grades 6 to 8. It is modeled after the highly successful Master Gardener program and offers horticultural and environmental science education, and leadership and life skills development through fun and creative activities. This program is committed to helping young people become good gardeners and good citizens so they can make a positive contribution to their community, school and family.

The JMG program incorporates group and individual activities, and is supported by a JMG youth handbook and a teacher/leader guide. Group activities can be held with a school class, JMG club, after-school program, home school or any group of interested young gardeners. Individual activities allow the youth gardener to pursue self-directed learning at home. Flexibility is a key component of the JMG program. Most of the activities presented allow the JMG leader and youth gardeners to customize the JMG program to meet their needs and interests.

Youths can become certified JMG Junior Master Gardeners by completing one group and one individual activity for each teaching concept in the eight chapters of the JMG Junior Master Gardener Handbook, and by participating in one leadership/community service project per chapter.

We are available to conduct adult leader training workshops for those interested in the JMG program. Recently we conducted workshops for Kay County and the OBGA Ambassadors here in Stillwater. We had a few teachers and adult leaders join us for the workshop here. If you are interested, please contact:

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An exciting adventure is just waiting for you and your gardeners in the JMG program. Make plantable greeting cards...discover the wonderful world of worms...find out how plants clean water...create your own spider web...grow your own vegetables...make yummy dishes for you and your family and so much more!

We hope that by using this guide and teaching materials, each of you will use horticulture as a tool to cultivate children and communities.

“Bloom Where You Are Planted and Happy Gardening!”

Restoring Those Old Iris Beds

David Hillock

Two of the most common reasons for iris beds to flower poorly are too much shade and overcrowded beds.

Most irises should receive a minimum 6 hours of full sunlight for best flowering. If they are in too much shade consider moving them to a sunnier spot in the landscape.

Iris that are more than 3 to 5 years old may have become overcrowded and should be divided.

Iris can be divided any time between a month after flowering until early fall, but many growers prefer to divide 4 to 6 weeks after the flowering period.

Cut the leaves to one-third their length. Dig the clump and wash soil off with a hose. Cut rhizomes apart so that each section has at least one healthy fan of leaves and firm, white roots. Older rhizomes (one year or older) may seem firm but should be discarded since they have limited flowering capacity. Also, inspect rhizomes for disease and insect damage. Damaged rhizomes should be trimmed and treated, or discarded if too badly damaged.

Replant with the top of the rhizome just showing above soil level. If planted too deep it will usually result in rotted stems and poor performance.

Xeriscape™ Gardening!

David Hillock

Xeriscape (pronounced zeri-scape) gardening is a concept that encourages quality landscaping that conserves water and protects the environment. It does not mean "zero-scape" which is a landscape with nothing but rocks and gravel; it does not mean just using cactus or yucca; and it does not mean "no" water.

The concept incorporates seven sound horticultural principles, that when practiced, will help preserve our most precious natural resource – water. But not only will it help preserve our water it will also save us a lot of time and money that would otherwise be spent trying to keep our landscapes alive during stressful periods.

The seven basic principles are:

- Planning and design
- Soil analysis
- Practical turf areas
- Appropriate plant selection
- Efficient irrigation
- Use of mulches
- Appropriate maintenance

These seven principles of Xeriscape are not new; they have been practiced in the landscape industry for decades. The concept of combining all seven guidelines into one effort toward

landscape water conservation is what makes Xeriscape landscaping unique. Below is a short summary of the principles.

1. Planning and design is the foundation of any water-wise landscape.
2. Soil analysis will determine whether soil improvement is needed for better water absorption and improved water-holding capacity.
3. Practical turf areas suggests that turfgrasses be used as a planned element in the landscape. Avoid impractical turf use, such as long, narrow areas.
4. Appropriate plant selection keeps the landscape more in tune with the natural environment. Both native and exotic plants make up the huge variety of plants available for Xeriscape landscaping.
5. By simply using efficient irrigation, you can instantly save 30 to 50 percent on your water bill.
6. Use mulches in flower and shrub beds to increase water penetration during irrigations and prevent water loss from the soil through evaporation.
7. Appropriate maintenance preserves the beauty of the Xeriscape landscape plus saves water. Pruning weeding, proper fertilization, pest control and irrigation system adjustments all conserve water.

Watermelon – Good and Good for You

William McGlynn

What is better, on a hot summer day, than a cool slice of fresh watermelon? We've known for years that watermelon is delicious and refreshing. In recent years we've learned that watermelon may be a healthy treat as well. A host of studies have focused on the health-beneficial properties of lycopene – the red pigment in both watermelon and tomatoes. Key studies on the properties of lycopene have indicated that lycopene may be the most effective of all the biological carotenoid antioxidants in quenching undesirable oxidation reactions in the body. These oxidation reactions have been listed as possible factors in the formation of many types of cancer as well as the formation of plaque deposits in coronary heart disease. Now, new evidence is emerging that watermelon may be even healthier than previously thought.

In the June 2002 issue of *Agricultural Research*, an article entitled "Watermelon Packs a Powerful Lycopene Punch" describes the latest findings of studies underway at USDA research labs in Lane, Oklahoma and Beltsville, Maryland. Working in cooperation with researchers from Oklahoma State University and others, Agricultural Research Service scientists have found many varieties of watermelon that have as much lycopene, and in some cases more lycopene, than the amount typically found in raw tomato. In addition, the results of a 19-week study conducted with 23 volunteers found that unlike tomatoes, watermelon did not need to be cooked in order to get maximum uptake of lycopene into the body. In fact, the lycopene levels measured in the volunteers who ate raw watermelon matched the levels found in those who consumed cooked tomato products. That's good news for folks who like a fresh slice of watermelon, especially those who don't like cooked tomato products. The Agricultural Research article may be found online at http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/AR/archive/jun02/lyco0602.htm.